

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

PRS-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 SAM-01 ACDA-10 /050 W

----- 103693

R 031134Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8840

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1970

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LE

SUBJ: KARAME'S COMMENTS ON POLITICAL SCENE

1. SUMMARY: KARAME WAS CONFIDENY AND FORTHCOMING. HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF REBUILDING ARMY, COMMENTED ON SEVERAL POLITICAL ISSUES, AND INDICATED CONFIDENCE GE WOULD BE AROUND IN PRESENT POSITION FOR LONG TIME TO COME, OUTLASTING "PRESENT" REGIME" (I.E., FRANGIE).
END SUMMARY.

2. KARAME WAS MORE FORTHCOMING THAN I CAN EVER REMEMBER HIM BEFORE WHEN ACTING DCM WARING AND I CALLED ON HIM MARCH 2. HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE DRAWN OUT ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES.

3. HE SAID ARMY WILL UNDERTAKE ITS LARGER SECURITY
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FOLE STARTING MARCH 3 (AS OPPOSED TO MARCH 1 START WHICH

HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED EARLIER). HE EMPHASIZED ARMY IS ONLY INSTRUMENT GOL HAS TO ESTABLISH SECURITY AND NORMALCY. IT MUST BE BUILA UP. HE DENIGRATED ROLE OF LT. KHATIB'S FORCES IN THE BEKAA AND CLEARLY IMPLIED KHATIB WOULD BE REMOVED AS A COMPETITOR TO THE ARMY. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, HE SAID ARMY LEADERSHIP NEEDS CHANGING. PEOPLE IN CHARGE CANNOT MAKE NECESSARY REFORMS AND HAVE TO GIVE WAY TO NEW BOLLD. HE ADDMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROCESS WOULD NOT BE EASY AND THAT ENOUGH VETERANS HAD TO BE KEPT BEHIND WHO KNEW HOW AN ARMY OPERATES. (COMMENT: MAIN THEME WE HAVE NOTED AS OF MARCH 3 IS NAMING OF LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER GEN. HANNA SA'ID AS PRESIDENT OF HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE).

4. KARAME INDICATED EXPANDED NEW GOVERNMENT WAS NOT IMMINENT. HE TOOK PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW THAT WRANGLING AMONG POLITICAL LEADERS AT PRESENT IS BETTER THAN SHOOTING AND MAY HELP GET SOME THINGS OUT OF THEIR SYSTEM PRIOR TO FORMATION OF LARGER GOVERNMENT.

5. KARAME STATED BELIEF THAT PROLONGATION OF PARLIAMENT WOULD IN THE END BE FOR TWO YEARS RATHER THAN ONE. PARLIAMENT HAS 40 DAYS TO DEBATE THE BILL FROM BEGINNING OF SPECIAL SESSION IN MARCH, AND HE DID NOT EXPECT DEFINITE RESULTS BEFORE APRIL.

6. HE REFERRED TO DIFFICLTIES BEING RAISED BY KAMAL EL-ASAD FOLLOWING DEATH OF BEKAA DEPUTY SABRI HAMADE. ASAD INSISTED ON BI-ELECTION IMMEDIATELY TO CONFORM WITH CONSTITUTION. HOWEVER, HOLDING AN ELECTION AT PRESENT IS IMPOSSIBLE. (KARAME DID NOT MENTION IT, BUT WE HEAR COMPROMISE MAY BE IN THE MAKING WHICH WOULD RESULT IN ONLY ONE CANDIDATE PRESENTING HIMSELF FOR ELECTION, HAMADE'S SON, NAJIB, WHO WOULD THEN BE DECLARED ELECTED WITHOUT BALLOTING). MORE GENERALLY, KARAME EXCLAIMED IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT BASIC LEBASESE PROBLEMS UNDER THE "PRESENT REGIME". HE MADE IT CLEAR HE WAS TALKING ABOUT REMAINDER OF FRANGIE'S TERM AS PRESIDENT. HE SAID HE HAD LONG BEEN PROPONENT OF IDEA THAT ALL ELECTIONS BE COUNTRY-WIDE, RATHER THAN CONFIDENTIAL

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BY DISTRICTS, AS A MEANS OF UNIFYING COUNTRY. JUMBLATT AGREED. THIS WAS NOT IN THE CARDS IN THE NEAR FUTURE, NOR WAS ANY OTHER BASIC CHANGE IN POLITICAL SYSTEM SUCH AS CREATION OF GREATER ROLE FOR POLITICAL PARTIES. IMPLICATION WAS KARAME PLANNED TO BE AROUND IN HIS PRESENT POSITION DEALING WITH SUCH PROBLEMS FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO COME.

7. OTHER ASPECTS OF DISCUSSION REPORTED SEPARATELY.

LAMBRAKIS

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